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ABSTRACT

This guidebook, along with others in the Solution Analysis Series, is designed to help groups of educational personnel "weed out" options--such as educational programs, and instructional materials--that might prove to be inappropriate for use in a particular school. Each step in the selection process is clearly identified. The guidebooks can easily be used by groups as well as by individuals. This booklet presents four steps that limit the options under consideration to two or three genuinely viable alternatives. Checklists designed for evaluation of the options are included. (LH)

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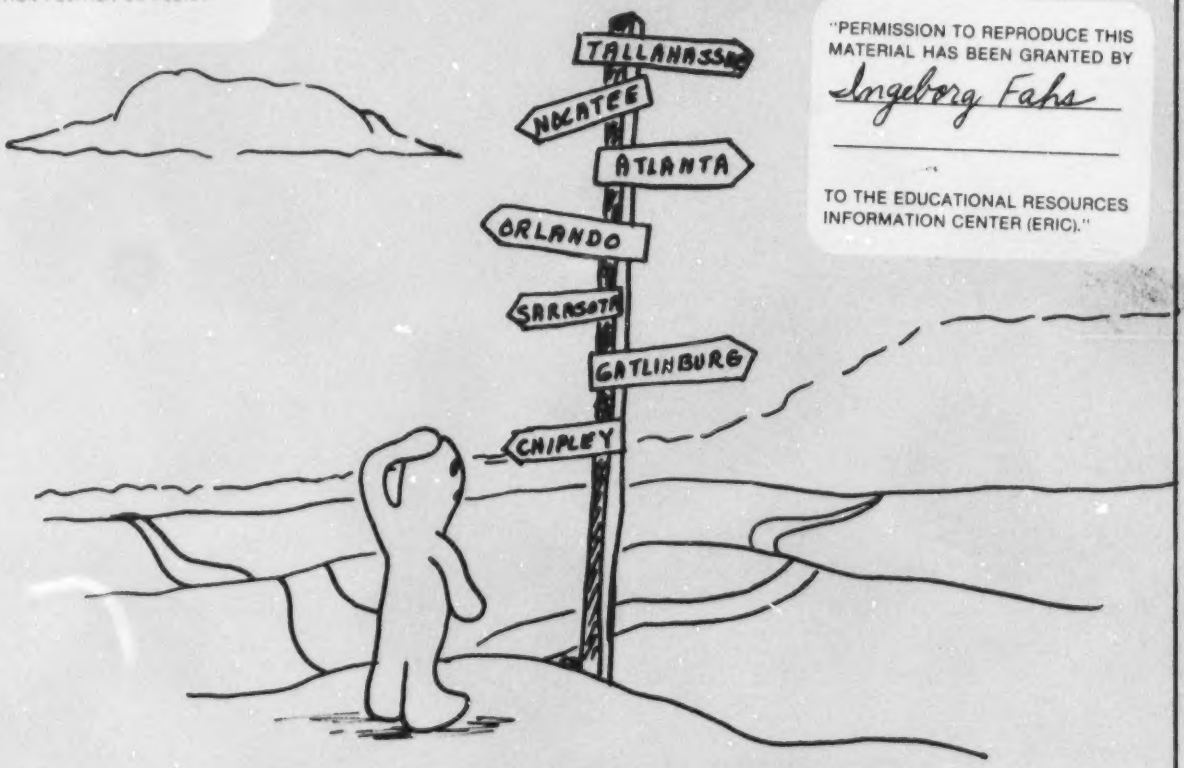

NARROWING THE ALTERNATIVES

SOLUTION ANALYSIS SERIES

I

NARROWING
THE
ALTERNATIVES

A Solution Analysis Series Guidebook

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INTRODUCTION

This guidebook begins with these assumptions:

- You have already surveyed the field of options available.
- You have chosen a number of these options for further discussion. (You have a list of names of the options under consideration.)
- You have a group of decision makers who will review these options and try to choose one to adopt to meet your school's needs. (This group will be referred to in the following text as the decision-making group.)

The process that you are now engaging in is a way of narrowing these options to the one which you will choose to adopt. This guidebook, as well as the others in the Solution Analysis Series, is designed to help your group systematically "weed out" options which, upon closer investigation, would be inappropriate for use in your school. Each step in this "weeding out" process is clearly identified. A group could work through this guidebook, doing as many steps at a time as the group chooses. It is designed to be done in steps, so it should be easy to plan for its use with your group in one or more group meetings.

Step 1 consists of answering a list of questions which will help eliminate the most inappropriate options currently in the pool. You should address one product at a time, asking the whole set of questions about each product before going on to the next.

In Step 2 you are asked to fill out the PRODUCT DESCRIPTION CHECKLIST for each of the remaining options in the pool.

In Step 3 you are asked to develop a descriptive presentation about each option still under consideration. This description should be based on the PRODUCT DESCRIPTION CHECKLIST you filled out in Step 2.

In Step 4 your group is asked to discuss another set of questions after the members have heard the descriptive presentations about each option. The group can then decide to further narrow the options as a result of this discussion.

When you are finished with this booklet, you should have narrowed the list of options down to two or three that are really viable ones. The next step, then, is to submit each of these options to a cost and benefit rating analysis. This procedure is described in the next guidebook in the Solution Analysis Series -- "Rating the Costs and Benefits."

STEP 1: WEEDING OUT INAPPROPRIATE OPTIONS

Before you begin, be sure you have the following items available at the decision-making group meeting:

1. List of options under consideration.
2. The Florida Linkage System PROBLEM STATEMENT FORM.
3. List of your goals.
4. Statement of district policy and philosophy on curriculum.
5. Publishers' descriptions of each option under consideration.

NOW ASK THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU "WEED OUT" INAPPROPRIATE PRODUCT OPTIONS:

1) Do your goals for improvement match the stated objectives of the product?

2) Are the expected outcomes of the product congruent with the "evidence of effectiveness" you identified in your Problem Statement?

NOTE: A "no" answer for either of these questions should not necessarily eliminate the product. If you feel there is something about it which makes the product so desirable that you do not wish to eliminate it, this may be due to the fact that it

is actually meeting some needs which you did not express in your Problem Statement. If this is the case, your next step is to go back and reexamine the problem. Then revise your Problem Statement accordingly.

3) Do the program's materials, approach, and goals adhere to the philosophy and policies of your district?

   NOTE: A "no" answer may not eliminate this product, but it does mean that you must spell out a plan whereby your school and the district may come to some accommodation.

4) Some products are designed so that a single teacher can implement the product with little outside support. Other products require the commitment of the school building staff; still others require district level support. Are you able to get the level of support needed for implementation of this product? (Money commitments, time commitments from district supervisory personnel, etc.)

5) Does this program require so much space (or a special type of space) that it could not be implemented in your school?

6) Does this program require extra personnel (e.g. teacher aides, project director, consultant, etc.) that are unavailable in your situation?

7) Is the program too expensive to be considered feasible at this time?

The group may find the PROGRAM REVIEW SHEET (see next page) helpful for recording the decisions made during the discussion. You will need to make a copy for each product option under consideration.

BY NOW, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO ELIMINATE A NUMBER OF OPTIONS WHICH ARE NOT APPROPRIATE, ACCORDING TO YOUR ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS ABOVE.

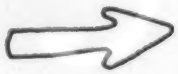
PROGRAM REVIEW SHEET		Rating: Approved _____ Eliminated _____
Title:_____		
Questions	Response	Note
1. Do the product goals match the school goals?	Yes No	
2. Do the expected product outcomes agree with the identified evidence of effectiveness?	Yes No	
3. Does the product fit district policy and philosophy?	Yes No	
4. Are you able to get the level of support (district, school, teacher) needed for implementation?	Yes No	
5. Are space requirements of the product available?	Yes No	
6. Are staff requirements of the product available?	Yes No	
7. Are money requirements of the product available?	Yes No	

STEP 2: DOING PRODUCT DESCRIPTIONS

Before you begin, be sure you have:

1. The list of options still under consideration
2. The publishers' descriptions of these options
3. A blank copy of the PRODUCT DESCRIPTION CHECKLIST for each option under consideration
4. A clear idea of your school's practices using its current product

NOW YOU ARE READY TO FILL OUT THE PRODUCT DESCRIPTION CHECKLIST FOR EACH OPTION STILL UNDER CONSIDERATION.

IT BEGINS ON THE NEXT PAGE. 

There are a number of ways to complete this task. Each group member may choose to be responsible for a product, or the PRODUCT DESCRIPTION CHECKLIST can be completed by team effort.

PRODUCT DESCRIPTION CHECKLIST

NAME OF PRODUCT: _____

Please read each section carefully, and decide which factors describe the practices used in your school with your current program. Check those that do. Then read the factors for each section again and decide which ones describe the practices that would be used if this option were implemented in your school. Check those factors that would be expected with the program option under consideration.

-Product Description-	Check Current Practices	Check Expected Practices
Section 1. Design and Content		
Objectives stated		
Directions clearly given		
Instructional content interesting to students		
Uses illustration and other textual elaborations in learning		
Matches objectives		
Non-sexist		
Non-racist		
Practice and tests congruent with objectives		
Easily accomplished in time and space		
Section 2. Types of Materials		
Textbooks		
Workbooks, worksheets		
Films/strips/slides		
Audio-tapes/records		
Kits		
Learning centers		
Pupil record keeping system		
Diagnostic/placement tests		
Teacher's manual		
Supplementary texts		
Supplementary worksheets		

Section 2. Types of Materials -continued-		
Supplementary audiovisual materials		
Others: (Write In)		
Section 3. Teacher Training		
Prior to adoption only		
Prior to adoption plus intermittent consultation and updating service		
Provides manuals, audiovisual programmed modules that can be used for review or for training new teachers		
Requires teachers to listen only		
Requires teachers to observe demonstation with students		
Requires teachers to practice while observed by consultant		
Requires teachers to produce materials		
Others: (Write In)		
Section 4. Classroom Organization		
Self contained classroom		
Team teaching (student exchange)		
Pull-out programs		
STUDENT GROUPING		
Individual (one to one)		
Ad hoc ability groups (formed daily or weekly for prescription only)		
Permanent ability grouping		
Whole class instruction		
INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES		
Diagnostic prescriptive		
Tutoring		
Direct teaching		

Section 4. Classroom Organization -continued-		
Programmed learning		
Special space required (learning centers, labs, etc.		
Others: (Write In)		
Section 5. School Organization		
Non-graded primary team		
Non-graded intermediate team		
All grade levels		
Continuous progress with heterogeneously grouped homerooms		
Departmentalized by subject area		
Teams for grouping within subjects		
Diagnostic-prescriptive facilities and division of labor		
Others: (Write In)		
Section 6. Main Student Activities		
Recitation		
Drill exercises		
Listening to teacher		
Oral text reading		
Silent text reading		
Workbooks or sheets		
Audio-visual use		
Games		
Others: (Write In)		
Section 7. Basis for Student Evaluation		
Completed workbook exercises		

Section 7. Basis for Student Evaluation -continued-		
Copied words, sentences, etc.		
Written themes, stories		
Oral "telling"		
Program tests - how often?		
Self-evaluation tests to prepare for program tests		
Others: (Write In)		
Section 8. Main Teacher Activities		
LESSON PLANNING		
Assisted by teacher's manual?		
With materials, objectives?		
With audio-visual devices?		
With kits of papers?		
Daily, weekly, monthly?		
DURING CLASS		
Supervising & managing individualized self-instructional lessons, providing help on a one-to-one basis		
Presenting content information to group(s)		
Administering skill drills		
Presenting questions to stimulate problem solving		
Testing students		
Making individualized prescriptions		
Others: (Write In)		
AFTER CLASS		
Record keeping		
Writing tests		

Section 8. Main Teacher Activities -continued-		
Grading tests		
Reshelving materials		
Writing supplementary drill for self-instructional materials		
Planning group presentations		
Tutoring children who cannot get it with the material provided		
Others: (Write In)		
Section 9. Extra Resources Required for Implementation		
Clerical help		
Supplies		
Furniture and equipment		
Travel funds for teachers to visit demonstration sites		
Resources for supplemental activities		
Release time for teacher training		
Others: (Write In)		
Section 10. Validation		
DATA GATHERED		
Recently		
In settings similar to this school		
EFFECTIVENESS IN TERMS OF		
Student achievement		
Student satisfaction		
Teacher satisfaction		

STEP 3:

PRESENTING PRODUCT DESCRIPTIONS TO THE GROUP

Before you begin, be sure that you have:

1. A completed PRODUCT DESCRIPTION CHECKLIST for each option still under consideration.
2. A summary description of each product taken from its PRODUCT DESCRIPTION CHECKLIST.

Now is the time to present to the group a description of each product still under consideration. One way of doing this might be to have each member, or a small group of members, take one product and its PRODUCT DESCRIPTION CHECKLIST to prepare a presentation for the group.

The description should include the facts about how it works and an estimate of the amount of change that would be required in your school to implement the product.

STEP 4:

CHOOSING THE BEST OPTIONS IN EACH CATEGORY

After these presentations have been made, the following questions should be discussed thoroughly by the group, in order to arrive at a decision about how to further narrow the options under consideration. The questions serve the purpose of sorting products with "best" characteristics from the list of options. The selected questions are meant as a guide. You may add or eliminate questions so that the characteristics which you desire in a product are included.

It is suggested that all the questions be read before any answer is derived. Each question should then be read and the decision-making group should reach consensus about which product fits the question best. Your decision may be recorded on the PROGRAM SURVEY (see page 16). You only need to make one copy of the survey because you will record consensus decisions of the group only.

Questions:

1) Which of these programs has the best organized materials (e.g. clearly stated objectives, information teaching manual, structured activities, good test items, simple record keeping system, etc.)?

Rationale When researchers reviewed characteristics of products which worked to increase achievement, they found that a common trait was a systematic design:

a) objectives clearly stated and measurable,

b) test items match objectives and feedback on performance is immediate (remember: testing can be conducted by an oral question and oral response as well as paper and pencil),

c) sequential presentation of well structured activities and the direct instruction of skills.

2) Which of these products incorporates the teaching style that best fits your needs and wants?

3) Which of these products best fits the nature of your student population?

Rationale Questions 2 and 3 ask for judgements about the "fit" of the product to those who are most important to your school. If products are equally successful in accomplishing the goal, then selecting one which fits the human element better will ease the difficulties associated with change.

4) Which product's objectives and approaches are closest to the outcomes we want and match the sources of the problem identified in the FLS PROBLEM STATEMENT?

Rationale All of the products you are now considering match the stated objectives for change, but some may plan for improvement by changing something that you considered a source of the problem. Such a product would fit your situation better. For example,

if you identified instructional strategy as a source of the problem, then a product which provided extensive training for a successful strategy in reading instruction would perhaps be a closer match than a product which primarily provided a strategy for motivating students in reading.

5) Which program has the fewest constraints in terms of cost, space, and personnel requirements?

6) Which of these programs requires the least amount of change in terms of teacher behavior and classroom organization?

Rationale This is the economy question. If there is a product that meets the goals and yet requires little energy to implement, then it ought to be given prime consideration. We are often led into thinking that improvement requires a clean sweep of old ways, but research shows that a successful strategy for improvement can be one which takes small steps and is built upon past behaviors.

Using the PROGRAM SURVEY, page 18, you now have a list of "front running" products. The list may contain five or more names (if you added questions). Or it may be that one or two products were named first in several categories.

It would be wise at this point to see that your list does not exceed three products. If it does, you need to eliminate some products by consensus.

NOTE: You may be feeling uncomfortable at this point. There may be one product that came in "second" in several categories, and you feel that it should not be eliminated from consideration just because it was not "first" in any category.

Please remember that the NARROWING THE ALTERNATIVES procedure is a guide. It is meant to enhance your intuition about products, and not as a substitute for your input. Bring your feelings into the open and discuss with the group your insights about a product you support.

PROGRAM SURVEY (FOR USE WITH GROUP DISCUSSION)

ITEM	PROGRAM TITLES
1. This product is well organized (e.g. has clearly stated objectives, easily followed teacher manuals, well-structured activities, simple record keeping systems, etc.)	
2. This product incorporates the teaching style best fitted to our needs and wants.	
3. This product fits the composition of our student population.	
4. The objectives and outcomes of this product are closest to the goals and the sources of the problem we identified in the Problem Statement.	
5. This product has the fewest constraints in terms of cost, space, and personnel requirements.	
6. This product requires the least amount of change in terms of teacher behavior and classroom organization.	

AT THIS POINT, YOU SHOULD HAVE TWO OR THREE OPTIONS LEFT. THE NEXT GUIDEBOOK IN THE SERIES, "RATING COSTS AND BENEFITS," WILL HELP YOU DETERMINE WHICH OF THE REMAINING OPTIONS IS THE BEST ONE FOR YOUR SCHOOL.